

# Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business : fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES. }  
Vol. XIII. No. 26. }

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 1868.

WHOLE SERIES. }  
Vol. XXXII. No. 26. }

## Poetry.

From Hymns from the Land of Luther.

### Psalm cvii. 26.

Lord, the waves are breaking o'er me and around ;  
Oft of coming tempest I hear the moaning sound ;  
Here there is no safety, rocks on either hand ;  
'Tis a foreign roadstead, a strange and hostile land.  
Wherefore should I linger ? Others gone before,  
Long since safe are landed on a friendly shore,  
Now the sailing orders, in mercy Lord bestow, —  
Loose the cable, let me go !

Lord, the night is closing round my feeble bark ;  
How shall I encounter its watches, long and dark ?  
Sorely worn and shatter'd by many a billow past,  
Can I stand another rude and stormy blast ?  
Ah ! the promised haven I never may attain,  
Sinking and forgotten amid the lonely main ;  
Enemies around me, gloomy depths below !  
Loose the cable, let me go !

Lord, I would be near Thee, with Thee where Thou art, —  
Thine own word hath said it, "'tis better to depart,"  
There to serve the better, there to love thee more,  
With thy ransom'd people to worship and adore.  
Ever to thy presence Thou dost call Thine own, —  
Why am I remaining helpless and alone ?  
Oh ! to see thy glory, thy wondrous love to know !  
Loose the cable, let me go !

Lord, the lights are gleaming from the distant shore,  
Where no billows threaten, where no tempests roar,  
Long beloved voices, calling me, I hear, —  
Oh ! how sweet their summons falls upon my ear !  
Here are foes and strangers, faithless hearts and cold,  
There is fond affection, fondly proved of old !  
Let me haste to join them ! may it not be so ?  
Loose the cable, let me go !

Hark ! the solemn answer ! Hark ! the promise sure !  
"Blessed are the servants who to the end endure !"  
Yet a little longer tarry, and hope on !  
Yet a little longer, weak and weary one !  
More to perfect patience, to grow in faith and love,  
More my strength and wisdom and faithfulness to prove ;  
Then the sailing orders the Captain shall bestow,  
Loose the cable, let thee go.

## Ecclesiastical.

### CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE N. S. CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren, —

It seems good to us, in issuing our annual address to you, to present for your consideration and spiritual improvement, a few thoughts on Christian Forgiveness. We do not intend to send you such an exhaustive discussion of the question, as shall leave no room for further record or remark, or, as indeed shall attract attention to intellectual ability, but rather, in view of our needs as Christians, and the world's needs as sinners, do we seek "to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance," to the exercise of those precepts the Master has given us.

In the Saviour's teaching a very prominent place is given to forgiveness. He came to teach Divine Forgiveness in its fulness, and to inculcate the carrying out of the same Divine principle by men toward each other. This last he began to accomplish by correcting the then existing law on the subject. "The Jews had it, 'Love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.'" In place of this the Saviour put, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you," and this rule He enforces by the most cogent reasoning. Less than this He says others do also. Hence anything less cannot secure Christian reward, or give proof of being a child of God. Afterwards, as opportunity occurred, or as occasion required, He set forth the doctrine, giving it always, as all who notice must observe, great prominence and emphasis. When one comes to Him to ascertain the limit of forbearance toward a sinning brother, evidently supposing himself most generous in naming "seven times" as all that can be desired, the Saviour says, rather let it be "seventy times seven." And again, "if thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." When He is setting forth the principles of our faith in parables, he teaches most emphatically and forcibly the duty of those receiving forgiveness, to forgive others also. No one reading that parable can fail to observe the reasonableness of the demand, of the Master of the house, that minor offences be forgiven because of greater offences being pardoned. — And then, too, in that wonderful form of prayer given by the Redeemer to His disciples, noticeable surely is the pe-

tion for forgiveness He puts into their lips, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." So too, Mark repeats, "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any : that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." How full and forcible this teaching, and how calculated to arouse our thoughts, and, it may be, our fears too.

For brethren, notice, how expressly and distinctly it is stated, that God requires a full and free forgiveness on our part, of all fancied or real offences against us, if we would have a full forgiveness of Him. In the teaching no allowance is made for peculiar circumstances, either in the offending or the offended, that is to say, for that kind of reasoning so common, "but my case is a peculiar one, the Bible rule is general, and cannot be followed in such a case as this." One specification alone is made, in the case of the oft sinning brother, if he repent, forgive him. Had the case required it, other specifications could have been given as well as this. Since they are not, it is not well to take upon ourselves the liberty of making them. — Indeed a correct apprehension of the petition the Saviour taught us to make, forbids all attempts at softening down or reasoning to suit convenience. We ask God to make the measure of our forgiveness of others, a standard of His own forgiveness toward us. Suppose He find in our hearts, the world's idea, perhaps its highest notion of this virtue, "I can forgive, but I cannot forget," or "I'll forgive when such conditions are complied with, or an acknowledgement of wrong made," are we prepared to have our desire toward God answered accordingly? Would such dealing of God toward us, be accounted forgiveness at all? We rejoice in a full pardon of all our sins, be they ever so aggravating. Then let us not deceive ourselves, that we can forgive men one way and God forgive us another. That only, evidently, is forgiveness between man and man, that is forgiveness between God and men.

If from this explicit teaching, we pass on to the teaching and practice of those who immediately received it from the Lord, we shall discover how they understood the Redeemer, and what importance they attached to the doctrine. In the epistles to the churches all are aware how often such exhortations as these are given, "Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love;" "Bless them which persecute you, bless, and curse not." "Be of the same mind one toward another." "Recompense to no man evil for evil." "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men." "Let every one of us please his neighbour, for his good to edification." "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." "Be of one mind, live in peace." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." These certainly suffice to show in what manner the Apostle understood our Lord, as also the place this principle occupied in their minds.

The lives of these men is as distinct on this point as their utterances. Teaching forgiveness and forbearance they had opportunity to practice their own teaching. They are made the objects of universal distrust and suspicion, the "filth and off-scouring of all things." By sinners and among false brethren their perils are numerous, the sufferings great, and very aggravating. Still they take "joyfully the spoiling of their goods," and glory in being counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. — We hear of no plots organized among them for revenge, or for personal deliverance. There are no burning of yersons or of cities, no mysterious disappearance or death of public men. No insidious night attacks. All their injuries are borne patiently, forgiven freely. — Stephen in the very agonies of an unjust and most cruel death, prays for his murderers. The church cast into deep affliction by the threatened execution of Peter, meets together to pray for him, and doubtless for his tormenters also. Paul and Silas freed from the hand of him who had "thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks" do not escape, but wait to present eternal redemption to their jail-keeper. These and many other incidents that might be mentioned, show us how these men understood their Master, and what stress they put upon His teaching. They certainly did not deem themselves at liberty to receive or teach one kind of

doctrine and practice its opposite, nor did they seek to tone down doctrine that practice might be attended with less difficulty.

The great matter, in regard to the carrying out of this principle is the cherishing a proper spirit. This entirely changes the aspect of the duty, hiding its hard features, and clothing it in glory. For so soon as men feel that it is godlike to forgive, there seems no hardship in the case. The right spirit reduces the causes for the exercise of this virtue. For it "thinketh no evil, suffereth long and is kind . . . is not easily provoked," that is, it finds not cause for complaint in every unguarded word or act of others. The possessor of such a spirit, does not feel himself aggrieved in all that appears a little out of the usual course. He treats others in all fairness, not only in his own conduct, but in the construction he puts upon the conduct of others. And if cause of complaint comes he readily finds many extenuating circumstances, that go far toward lessening the offence and making the forgiveness less difficult. It may be proper to notice too, that the duty can be met, only as one possesses the right spirit. This is a matter between ourselves and God, as well as between man and man. As we have stated, our forgiveness of our fellows affects our standing in his sight. Then it must be a real forgiveness, the result of a tender, loving, Christ-like spirit, otherwise the last condition is worse than the first.

And now, dear brethren, in conclusion, most seriously and affectionately would we urge upon your attention the necessity of giving heed to this matter, to which so imperfectly and briefly we have called your attention. Do not reasons abundant occur to every mind why there should be prayerful consideration given to the subject throughout all our churches? Has it not become actually imperative? Can the world be satisfied with our professions, unless there appear possession also? And surely, we give poor proof of union and fellowship with Him "who, though he was rich yet for our sakes became poor," who "though equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and being found in fashion as a man humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," when we shew little regard to his precepts, or in our conduct manifest the opposite of all this. How can men believe that we have received full pardon of all our sins, when they see us in practice, apparently caring so little about the forgiveness. To have been forgiven, to have felt its joy, is supposed to make forgiveness toward others easy. And so it does. Then let us seek to forgive!

And what prospect have we, notwithstanding we are a professed church of the Lord Jesus without this spirit among us? Who will be convinced that "the Lord is among us of a truth?" Who will honour our faith, or seek shelter in our principles while there is manifest neglect, or nearly open denial of so important a scripture precept? For is it not true, that more than ever perhaps, the church and the world both need religion worked out. Words alone can satisfy no longer. Sentimentalism will be despised. Men are demanding truth made real, by being embodied in action. This is eminently a working, real age, and men must see real religion, or they will despise those who say they have it. References to the history of the Fathers, as are they called, are stale. As a denomination, our success depends upon the men of to-day, so far as it depends upon men at all, and not upon those who have preceded us. We shall secure success, rather say, we shall glorify God and save men, in proportion as we take hold of this and other kindred Divine precepts, and make them the rule of daily life. Oh, for the sake of a loving, dying, living Lord, let us learn to love men, even our enemies, and forgive as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

### "Send for the Minister."

Going to the city hospital, as is my custom, I found one day not long since, a new patient lying on a cot in the corner near the stove. He was an emaciated, middle-aged man, very ill, I could see.

"Do you love Jesus? Are you a Christian, my friend?" I asked, as I bent over him.

"Oh, madam," he whispered eagerly, without answering my question, "I wish you would send for a minister. Do send one to me, if you please. There's nobody but the priest comes here, and I don't want him."

"Are you a member of church?"

"Yes; but I have gone so far astray; I have been so wicked." And he trembled as he spoke. He shrank at the very thought of going into the presence of the Judge unprepared. "Oh, if God would only let me get up from this bed again, I would lead a different life. Oh, I am such a sinner," he kept repeating.

I saw, too, that he did not understand God's plan of salvation; so I sat down on the bench beside his cot, and plainly and simply showed him that

"None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good;

and try to point him to the Saviour, and show him the way. While I talked, he kept turning the invitations and promises I repeated to him into prayers.

"God be merciful to me a sinner;" "Jesus cleanse me from sin;" "Lord, give me thy Spirit;" "Help me to believe on